

Commercial Building
818 F Street, N.W.
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-215

HABS
DC
WASH
172 -

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
801 19th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS NO. DC-215

COMMERCIAL BUILDING

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Location: 818 F Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

Present Owner: Orren F & Ralph Stein
527 Ninth Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

Present Occupant: Marans

Present Use: Stationery and printing store.

Brief Statement of Significance: A commercial building of the early days when F Street was becoming an important shopping district.

PART 1. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: On March 19, 1962 Orren F. Stein became owner of this property the title to which was deeded to him by Margaretha A. S. Wimbles, et al.; parties of the second part are descended heirs of original owner, J. B. Adams. [Deed 11787-460 rec. April 23, 1962]

In Quit Claim Deed 11787-468 rec. April 23, 1962, Orren F. Stein deeded to Ralph Stein on April 18, 1962, an undivided half interest.

2. Date of erection: Probably the late 1870's.

B. Sources of information:

Primary and unpublished sources: District of Columbia records.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATIONA. General statement:

1. Architectural interest and merit: A building which forms part of a picturesque commercial group, now largely covered with modern facing, with some original details remaining.
2. Condition of fabric: Basically this entire building has been remodeled. Its condition is fair with portions of its detailing rotting. Cornice is original.

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B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 16.7' X 75'; front (2 bays); 3 stories and basement; rectangular in shape.
2. Foundations: Not visible.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: Masonry bearing walls. East and west exterior walls are party walls. The entire first floor has been modernized with large glass windows and wall, composed of chipped marble embedded in concrete. In addition, all of the upper front of the building is new except for the cornice, which is original. The second and third story windows of the two-bay wide front have been covered with a metallic facing, pale blue in color and made up of an assembly of squares approximately 1'6" X 1'6". The facing has an aluminum strip extending vertically up its center from the second floor level to nearly the base of the cornice. This strip projects out from the surface of the facing and has a design which resembles the plan of four gable roofs joined longitudinally in a line.

Near the upper left corner of the front is the imprint or outline of where a triangle with rounded corners once was. In the lower right corner of the front is the outline of a vertical rectangle; also along the left side of the front are holes. All of these markings indicate that there were attachments to the facing of some kind.

The south (rear) wall of the building is made of red brick (American bonding) and is two bays wide.

4. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: Entrance walkway has been paved. There are no stoops or porches, but there is a slight slope up to entrance.
5. Chimneys: No visible chimneys.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Entrance door (approx.) 3' wide and 7' high. Modern glass door with aluminum threshold. Door swings to exterior.
 - b. Windows: Large glass windows with metal frame on front. Rear wall has simple double-hung windows trimmed in wood moulding (4/4).

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7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Mostly flat, with small slope running north to south.
- b. Cornice: Just above the metal facing of the building is a simple architrave, divided into three indented panels trimmed in simple moulding. Above this architrave is the frieze of the entablature. The frieze is composed of a course of five evenly spaced brackets with inwardly curved, vertical, indented panels down their fronts. These brackets support a slanted metal cornice with metal framing outlining horizontal rectangles.

The cornice imitates a roof and is terminated at each end by large ornamental brackets with horizontal moulded strips intermittently placed down its front. The top of the bracket slants to conform to the cornice. The brackets are continued down flush with the surface of the wall about halfway where they project out again to indicate a clear extension of the top bracket. Below this portion of the ornamentation, on both sides of the building, are fragments which show that this detailing continued down still further to the second floor level.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: In plan, this building appears all open with a small storage room and stairway to the second floor in the rear. The upper floors were not made accessible for viewing. However, it was said by the proprietor that the entire building had been remodeled in the fashion of the first floor.
2. Flooring: There is a modern floor of composition tile.
3. Wall and ceiling finish: The ceiling is made of plaster with some portions of it hung. The wall is finished with brown cork tile and wood paneling. There are also large perforated cork panels painted white over portions of the wall. The ceiling height is approximately 14'.
4. Doorways and doors: A rear doorway is 4' wide with wood paneling and trim and is 6'8" high.
5. Mechanical equipment: The light fixtures are modern and hung approximately 2' from ceiling. Heating and cooling ducts are visible.

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D. Site and Surroundings:

General setting: The building faces north on F Street.
Buildings lie adjacent to east and west.

Prepared by: Thomas L. Fauntleroy
Student Architect
National Park Service
June 1969

Addendum to:
818 F Street, NW (Commercial Building)
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-215

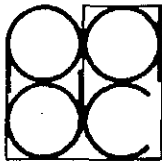
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Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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WASHINGTON, DC 20004

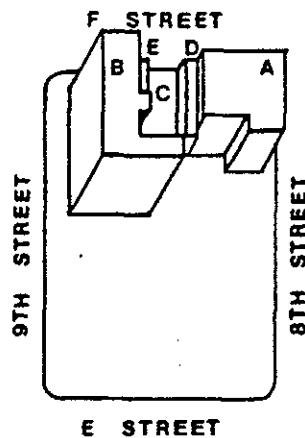
GENERAL CONSULTANTS

ANDERSON NOTTER/MARIANI
GENERAL PRESERVATION & CONSERVATION CONSULTANT
DEVROUX & PURINELL
ASSOCIATE ARCHITECTS
DAVID MCLAREN HART & ASSOCIATES
PRESERVATION & CONSERVATION CONSULTANT
MONK DUNSTONE ASSOCIATES
COST ESTIMATING CONSULTANT

HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

BUILDING DOCUMENTATION

Commercial Building
818 F Street, NW
Lot 807



GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Located near the corner of F and Ninth Streets, this small commercial building consists of a principal three-story high portion on the north facing F Street and a one-story appendage to the rear (south). The north-south length of the entire building is approximately fifty feet, while the three story portion is only thirty-nine feet long. The width of the building is constant at about sixteen feet. Front and rear exterior walls are masonry, with brick bearing party walls on either side supporting the interior wood framed floors. Most of the original front (north) facade is hidden from view by means of a concrete block wall, clad in metal panels, that rises from the top of the first floor storefront to just below the metal ornate Italianate roof cornice. Viewed from the interior, however, the original three windows per floor are still in place. Between the original facade and its newer, masking wall an air space has allowed some of the original metal facade elements to remain intact. The detailing of these elements, together with those that remain visible from the street, indicate the probability of a full ornamental program in metal on the original facade.

The interior is extremely simple and has undergone substantial remodeling, thereby eliminating most original finishes. The first floor consists mainly of an open space on the front. Street access is through a recessed central door flanked by modern display windows. To the rear (south) the projecting portion of the building houses a low-clearance mezzanine balcony over toilet facilities and a small storage room. The basement, second and third floors both feature an open plan. Circulation between levels is through a stairway that rises northward along the west party wall.

The building is presently occupied by a stationery store that uses the first floor as a sales room and the second floor for storage. The third floor is unoccupied.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

An interesting building in its original design, this commercial structure now affords no more than interesting isolated detailing as a result of the recladding of its upper two stories. The possibility of finding original detailing under the masking wall to reconstitute the facade to its original image is an important consideration in evaluating this building. A cast iron front and the overall proportions of the facade and its fenestration pattern (existing and visible from the inside) would not only integrate it to the surroundings, but would also contribute by enlivening the urban scape. The frame-like

quality of the original facade is a counterpoint to the brick planes of the neighboring facades.

Stylistically, the details are non-academic inventions assembled for their picturesqueness rather than correctness in terms of any period.

There are no building permits on record for the original construction, but indirect information and construction techniques would indicate an approximate 1870 date. According to the building's tenant, the facade recladding, for which no building is available appears to be about 1940.

This building is part of the 800 block of F Street that is designated with Landmark II status by the Joint Committee on Landmarks of the National Capital.

SIGNIFICANT FEATURES

Facade: The F Street facade was partially reclad around 1940 (no building permit available) so that the original elevation is mostly hidden from view. What stands today is a gross architectural distortion: a modern storefront with a flush wall above capped by an ornate Italianate cornice.

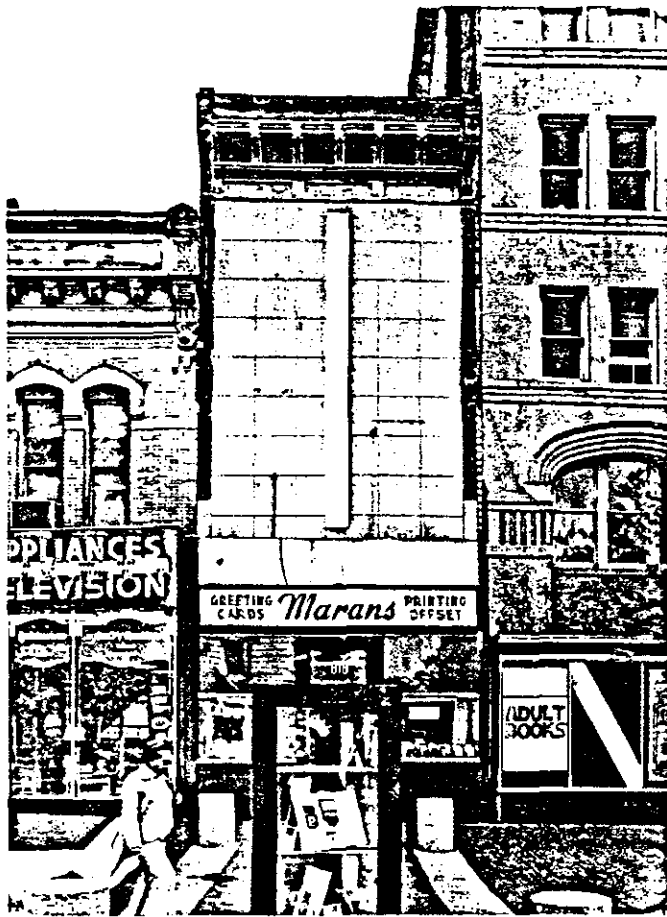
Aside from the cornice, lateral cast-iron members still remain and give evidence of the original cast-iron facade. Framing each side of the facade, a single metal band with double fluting springs from the sidewalk level and ascends the full height of the building acting functionally (not formally) as pilasters. At the first, second and roof levels, the band projects forward as a console to laterally contain the oversailing cornices at each level. The consoles end their forward projection in a block, where several of them still display a projecting decorative fleuron. (The first floor brackets are no longer extant; the first and second floor cornices must have been removed to install the modern cladding.)

The metal roof cornice, however, is intact and presents the rich non-academic decoration that must have characterized entire original facade. The order of the ornamentation springs from a flat base with three recessed panels that coincide with each of the concealed window bays below. Above the paneled band rise five brackets which in conjunction with the end consoles establish six equal divisions. The brackets' inwardly curved fronts have indented panels. The final cornice has a pitched top surface, imitating a shed roof, which is modulated by five ribs that imitate metal seams and correspond to the brackets below. The eave moulding is a simple gorge.

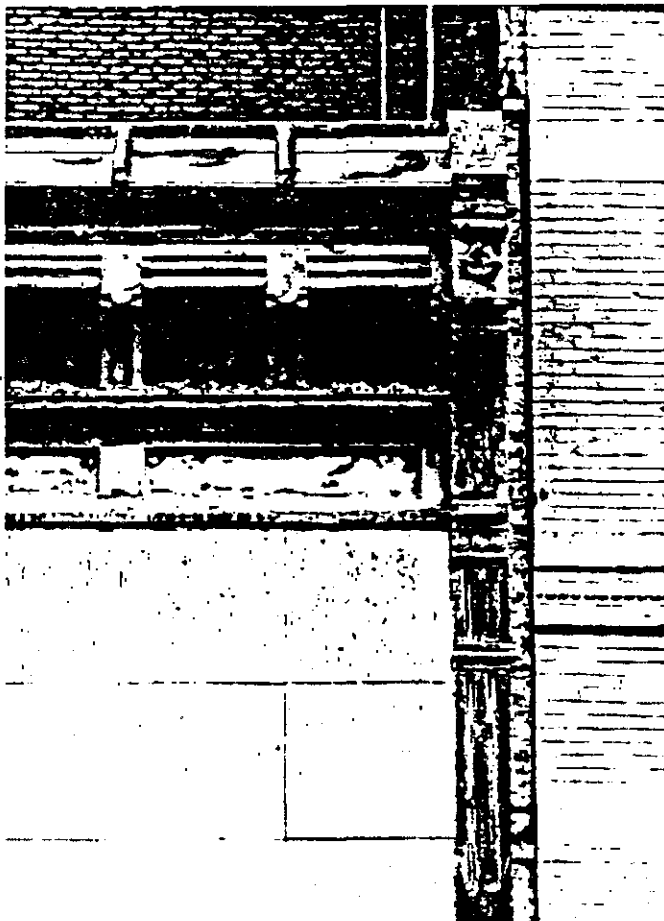
On each side of the building the top of each console follows the angle of the pitched cornice but rises past it, continuing the bracketing effect that is typical of all stories of the facade.

A historic photograph of the building reveals the original treatment of the second and third floors. Roof-like cornices, similar to the extant cornice, ran between consoles above the first and second floors. These effectively acted as a canopy above the first level and as a slightly projecting spandrel between the second and third floors. Slender cast-iron colonnettes, which are still in place behind the screen wall, flanked three double-hung 1/1 windows on each floor. Set in the sixteen foot wide building, these windows provided a relatively large area of glass set within a slender skeletal frame.

September 1979



F STREET (NORTH) FACADE



NORTH FACADE:
DETAIL OF CORNICE

Lot 8 East (Sublot 807)
818 F Street

Sublot 807 first appeared in the Tax Assessment Records in 1859 as an eastern subdivision of Lot 8. It measures approximately 16' along F Street by 39' deep.

1859.....The Tax Assessment Records first show a division of Lot 8 in 1859. The eastern portion was smaller, measuring 16'-8" in width. C.B. Jewell was the owner. The lot was assessed for \$4,966.00.

1864.....Jon. Dennis, Jr. now owned the lot. It had decreased in value to \$1,549.00.

1870.....The lot value rose to \$2,200.00.

Daniel Breed was a patent agent at 818 F Street.

1875.....Daniel Breed was still a tenant in the building, according to the Directories.

1878/79...The new owner of the lot was John Voegler. It was valued at \$2,434.00.

A variety of tenants inhabited the building: A dentist named A.H. Taylor; James A. Hoover & Co., hats, caps & furs; Armstrong & Co. photographers; J.F. Lucas, a piano tuner; John Voegler, tailor; and Charles F. Jarvis, watch and jewel dealer. The building saw a rapid turnover of tenants in the late 1800s, few of them remaining for more than two or three years.

1882
to

1892.....James Tharp operated a wine and liquor store. He was the only tenant listed in the Directories.

1883/84...J. Bradley Adams assumed ownership of the lot, now valued at \$2,432.00.

1893/94...Adams had relinquished the title to Bettie B. Swayze. The lot assessment increased to \$6,195.00. \$3,000.00 in improvements on the lot were assessed.

M. Losano & Son, tailors, occupied the building through 1897.

1899/

1900.....The assessment value for the ground was unchanged. \$2,200.00 in improvements were assessed. The title was now held by "Bettie B. Swayze et. al.". The Directories list Hearn & Gilbert as tailors at 818 F Street.

1901.....Thomas E. Gilbert appeared alone in the tailor shop in the Directory. His name reappeared periodically through 1907.

1905.....A permit was issued to replace a projecting show window. No owner was named (Building Permit #54005, 6/7/1905).

1908

to

1922.....The building was now firmly established as a tailoring shop. Howard S. Omohundro & Co. remained in operation here for many years.

1912.....Major reconstructive work was done on the three-story brick and iron building, including new stairs, a skylight, and the rebuilding of two show windows. H.S. Omohundro was indicated as the owner, N.R. Grim as architect and H.C. Halcken as builder (Building Permit #3475, 2/8/1912, cost: \$1,000.00).

1919.....Baist's Plat Map shows the lot with the number 807 for the first time.

1923

to

1924.....A person named Esbey took over the tailor shop.

1925

to

1954.....Selinger's Jewelry Shop took over the structure at 818 F Street.

1956.....The name of the store was Kay Jewelers.

1960

to

1962.....The Washington Shoe Co., Inc., moved into the building.

1964.....The Golden Keyboard Restaurant was the latest tenant in the building.

1967

to

1979.....Maran's Greeting Card Co. established a lengthy tenancy at 818 F Street.

SOURCES

Baist Real Estate Atlas

Bastert and Enthoffer Plat Maps

Boyd's City Directories

District of Columbia Building Permits

District of Columbia General Assessment Records

District of Columbia Recorder of Deeds

District of Columbia Surveyor's Office Records

District of Columbia Tax Records

Hopkins Real Estate Atlas

Polk's City Directories

Property Map for Downtown Urban Renewal Area for District of Columbia Redevelopment
Land Agency

Sanborn Insurance Map